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# **HCA EVALUATION REPORT**

## **RESULTS FROM THE CONSUMER SURVEY**

**(JANUARY - APRIL 2002)**

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For the  
**Neighborhood Legal Services**  
**Health Consumer Center of Los Angeles**

July 9, 2002

Conducted by  
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## **Background**

The USC Division of Community Health (formally known as the Center for Community Health Evaluation and Planning at USC) conducted a survey to evaluate services provided to individual consumers from the Health Consumer Alliance and from the Health Rights Hotline. Over 1,300 interviews were completed from June 2000 through December 2001. It is important to note that consumers who participated in the Consumer Survey provided their verbal consent to the Health Consumer Center or Health Rights Hotline to be eligible for participation in the Consumer Survey.

Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), home of the Health Consumer Center of Los Angeles (HCC-LA) requested that the USC Division of Community Health (USC) continue using the Consumer Survey to evaluate the effectiveness of their services provided to individual consumers from January through April, 2002. HCC-LA provided USC with a monthly sample of consenting consumers whose cases were closed during the preceding month. On average, 155 of these consumers provided their consent to participate in the evaluation each month from January through April, 2002. From this group, USC randomly selected 30 names to be included in the evaluation sample each month, yielding a total sample of 120 consumers over this time period. Evaluators completed 58 interviews with HCC-LA consumers from March through June, 2002. Interviews were completed approximately one month after the consumer's case was closed.

Data collection resulted in a 48% response rate. In other words, 58 interviews were completed of the 120 names and numbers selected for the survey. Among those who did *not* complete an interview, the majority was due to "unable to contact" (63%). This includes: wrong number, client does not live there, no phone number, number disconnected, number no longer in service, and consumer is out of the country. Other categories that explain why surveys were not completed include: "doesn't recall" (21%), "not interested" (11%), and "unable to communicate" (5%). USC did attempt to contact each consumer in the selected sample during various times of the day on several occasions (approximately six times each).

Results from the 58 completed interviews are presented in this report. It is important to note that these results only reflect this four-month time period, but may be used to compare the progress and consistency of results from previous reports to the Health Consumer Alliance. These are self-reported findings and have not been modified by the evaluators.

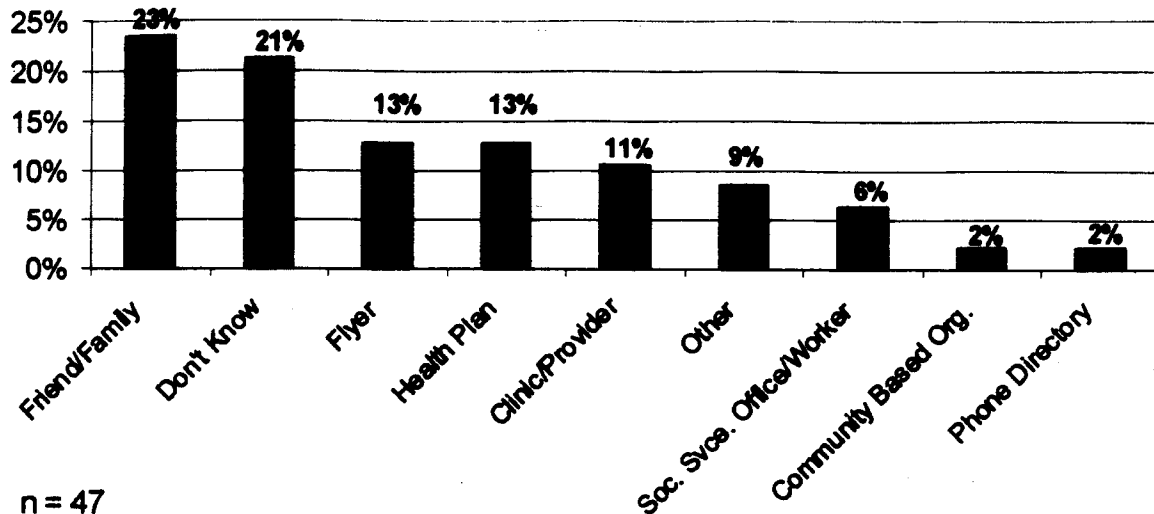
## **Consumer Survey Results**

### **Information about the sample (January through April 2002)**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Sample size	<b>120</b>	
Number of respondents	<b>58</b>	<b>48%</b> <b>(response rate)</b>
English surveys completed	<b>31</b>	<b>53%</b>
Spanish surveys completed	<b>27</b>	<b>47%</b>
First contacted HCC in person	<b>1</b>	<b>2%</b>
First contacted HCC by phone	<b>46</b>	<b>98%</b>
Contacted HCC because of an Eligibility Problem	<b>29</b>	<b>57%</b>
Contacted HCC because of a Service Problem	<b>17</b>	<b>33%</b>
Contacted HCC because of Other* problem	<b>5</b>	<b>10%</b>
*Other problems included: looking for services, dental record issues, social security benefits and problems, and obtaining legal information		

Respondents were asked about how they heard of the Center (HCC-LA). These responses often correspond to outreach efforts and satisfaction with services (e.g. when a friend told them about the Center based on personal experience). Chart 1 below illustrates the respondent's answers when asked, "How did you first hear about the <Health Consumer Center>?" "Family/friends" is the most frequent reason given for how the consumers heard of the Center, but it also shows that many consumers do not remember how they first heard of the Center. Flyers, health plans and health care providers are also effective sources of outreach for HCC-LA. Consumers also mentioned that they heard about the HCC-LA through their union representative, school, courthouse and housing authority as places where they first heard about the HCC-LA.

**Chart 1. HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT THE HEALTH CONSUMER CENTER?**



### **Problem Resolution**

This section will illustrate consumers' responses regarding the assistance they received from the HCC-LA, and other steps they may have taken to help resolve their problem. Many of these findings can be compared to previous HCC-LA results, as well as to the overall statewide findings in the HCA Evaluation Interim Report.

Chart 2 shows that 69% of the HCC-LA consumers reported that their problem was partially or completely resolved, compared to 56% from the last HCC-LA Report, an increase of 13%. Charts 3 – 7 provide information on the role of HCC played in assisting consumers.

**Chart 2. SINCE CONTACTING THE CENTER, WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOUR PROBLEM IS...**

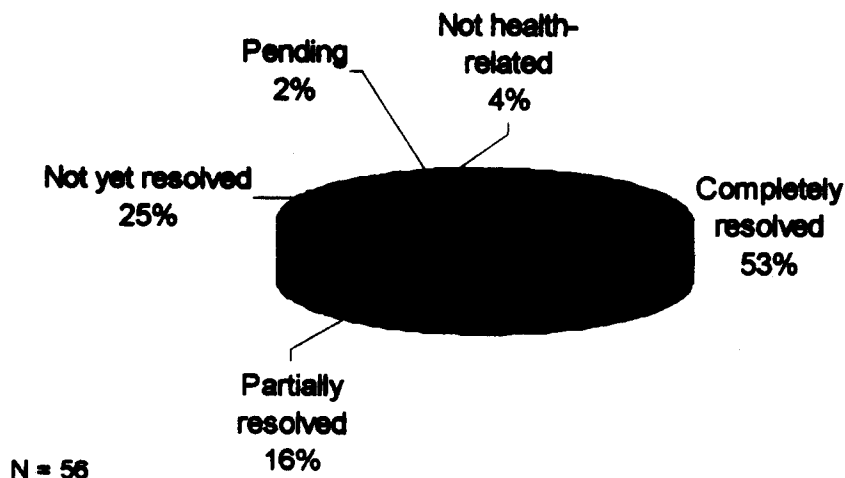
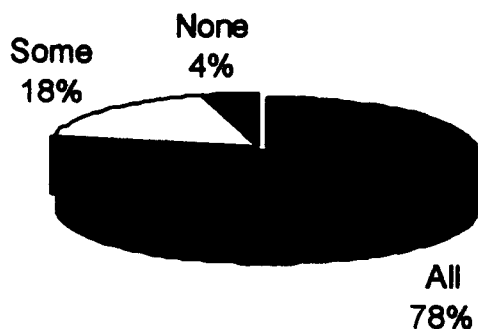


Chart 3 shows that 96% (an increase of more than 15% from the last report) of the HCC-LA consumers received some or all of the information they needed after contacting the Center; only 4% reported that they did not get any of the information they needed.

**Chart 3. AFTER CONTACTING THE CENTER,  
WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU GOT <\_\_\_\_> OF THE  
INFORMATION YOU NEEDED?**

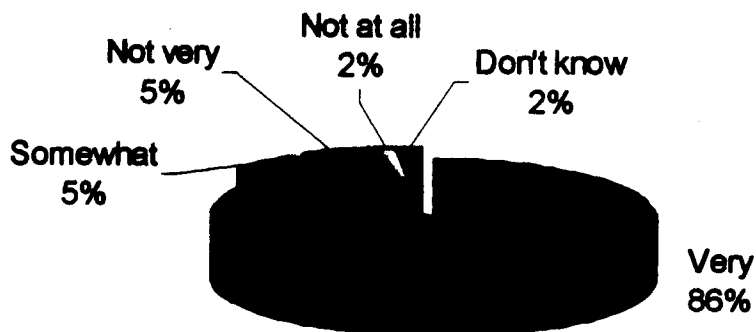


N=45

### **Helpfulness of HCC**

In Chart 4, ninety-one percent of the respondents reported that HCC was somewhat or very helpful in assisting them with their health-related problem. Again, this marks an improvement from the last HCA Report as well as over the aggregate HCA Statewide results.

**Chart 4. OVERALL, HOW HELPFUL WERE THEY  
(CENTER/LEGAL AID/HOTLINE) IN ASSISTING YOU  
WITH YOUR PROBLEM?**



N=58

Charts 5 and 6 below illustrate the results when respondents were asked: "what was particularly helpful to you," or, they were asked "why do you think they weren't very helpful" if they had previously responded "not very" or "not at all" helpful. Note that the number of responses is greater (N = 122) than the number of respondents (N = 53) in the next chart due to multiple responses given by some respondents.

Six specific names of HCC staff were mentioned by respondents, as being particularly helpful. This suggests that not only did the staff members provide quality service, but also the respondents clearly remembered the names of individual counselors as being particularly helpful, when many had also contacted various other agencies for assistance. The "other" responses included comments that the Center staff followed up, spoke the same language and returned their calls.

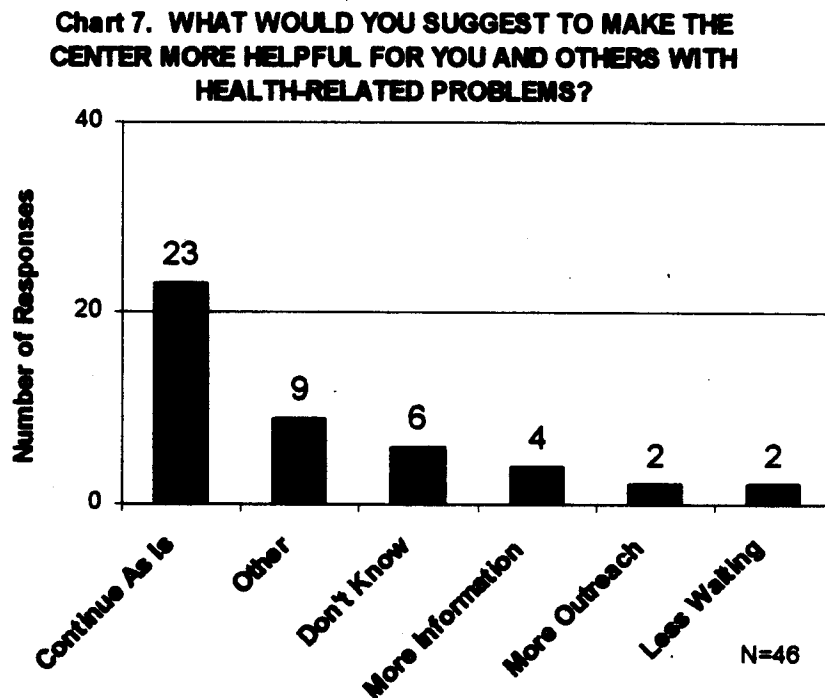
**Chart 5. WHAT WAS PARTICULARLY HELPFUL TO YOU?**

<b>Responses in Order by Highest Number by Responses</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Information/Advice Given by Center Staff	22	28%
Friendly Staff	14	18%
Specific Staff Person's Name	12	15%
Referral(s) Given/Learned Where to Go for Help	5	6%
Problem Was Solved	5	6%
Competent/Well-Qualified Staff	5	6%
Other	4	5%
Center Staff Were Willing to Help	4	5%
Caring Staff	3	4%
I Learned How to Solve My Problem	3	4%
Legal Assistance	2	3%
Had Someone on My Side	1	1%
Don't Know/Remember	0	0%
<b>Total</b> (percentages are rounded up so total may= >100%)	80	101%

Only a few (n = 4) respondents made comments indicating that the HCC-LA was not very helpful. These comments are listed in Chart 6 below.

<b>Chart 6. WHY DO YOU THINK THEY WEREN'T VERY HELPFUL?</b>		
<b>Response In Order By Highest # of Responses</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Problem Not Solved	2	50%
Other	1	25%
Didn't Teach Me How To Solve Problem	1	25%
Total	4	100%

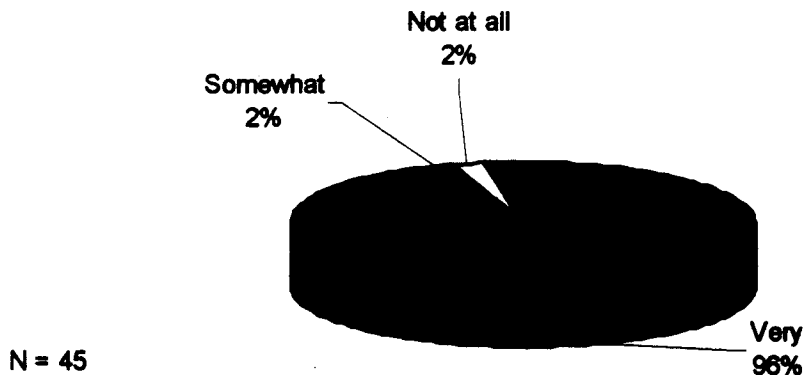
Chart 7 shows what participants suggested to HCC-LA for improving their services. Most consumers simply suggest that the HCC-LA continue to do what they are already doing. This question allowed for multiple responses, so the numbers in the chart reflect the actual number of responses provided by consumers, not percentages.



The "other" responses included: speak directly to young people, give references, speak up, quicker service, less waiting time, doesn't like having to leave a message all the time, hire more people like <name of staff member>, have some compassion, everything is great, and be more considerate of people's feelings.

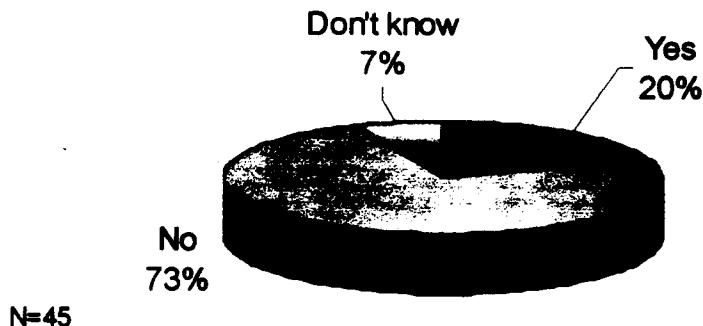
Chart 8 shows that ninety-eight percent of the respondents said that it was somewhat or very important to have a person who knew about the law and their rights work with them to help them solve their problem, which supports the idea of having a legal aid agency house an effective independent health consumer center. This result surpasses the last data shown from the previous HCC-LA Report (at 90%).

**Chart 8. HOW IMPORTANT WAS IT TO HAVE A PERSON WHO KNEW ABOUT THE LAW AND YOUR RIGHTS WORK WITH YOU TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEM?**



Charts 9 through 15 show the results of consumers' experience with contacting other agencies before and after contacting the HCC-LA. In assessing the unique role of the health consumer centers, respondents were asked if they had contacted other agencies prior to the HCC and the helpfulness of these agencies. Also, respondents were asked if they contacted another agency to follow-up with their problem after they interacted with the HCC. As indicated in Chart 9, 20% of the respondents contacted other agencies prior to their contact with the HCC. Most of these agencies were public health care agencies such as Medicare and Medi-Cal.

**Chart 9. BEFORE CONTACTING THE HCC, DID YOU CONTACT ANYONE ELSE, LIKE ANOTHER PERSON OR AGENCY, TO GET ASSISTANCE FOR YOUR PROBLEM?**



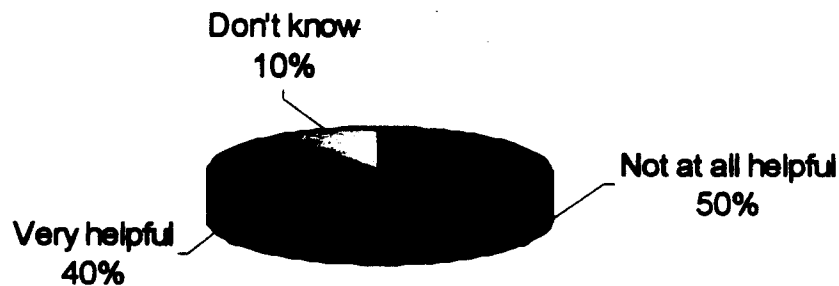


**Chart 10. WHAT WAS THE OTHER AGENCY/PLACE  
OR PERSON THAT YOU CONTACTED?**

	Number of Responses	Percentages
Medicare	2	20%
Don't Know/Remember	2	20%
Medi-Cal	1	10%
Health Plan	1	10%
Health Provider	1	10%
Family Member/Friend	1	10%
Legal Aid/Legal Assistance/Lawyer	1	10%
Other Government Health Office	1	10%
Total	10	100%

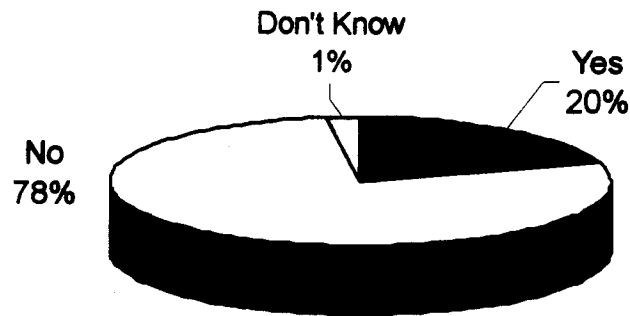
Consumers were then asked about the helpfulness of these other agencies (Chart 11). The results show that 40% of the consumers found these other agencies helpful, compared to 91% who found the HCC-LA helpful. This illustrates the consumer's interpretation of the value added by the HCC, compared to other agencies where they sought assistance.

**Chart 11. HOW HELPFUL WAS THE OTHER AGENCY YOU  
CONTACTED BEFORE CONTACTING HCC?**



N = 10

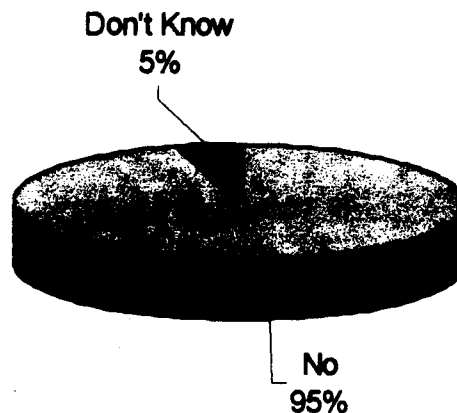
**Chart 12. AFTER SPEAKING TO THE CENTER STAFF,  
DID YOU CONTACT ANY HEALTH PROGRAM OR  
AGENCY TO FOLLOW UP ON YOUR PROBLEM?**



N=45

As indicated in Chart 13, the vast majority (95%) of the respondents said that they did not plan to contact another agency after they sought help at HCC-LA, which could suggest that the HCC-LA provided them with all the information and assistance they needed.

**Chart 13. DO YOU PLAN TO CONTACT  
ANY PROGRAM OR AGENCY?**



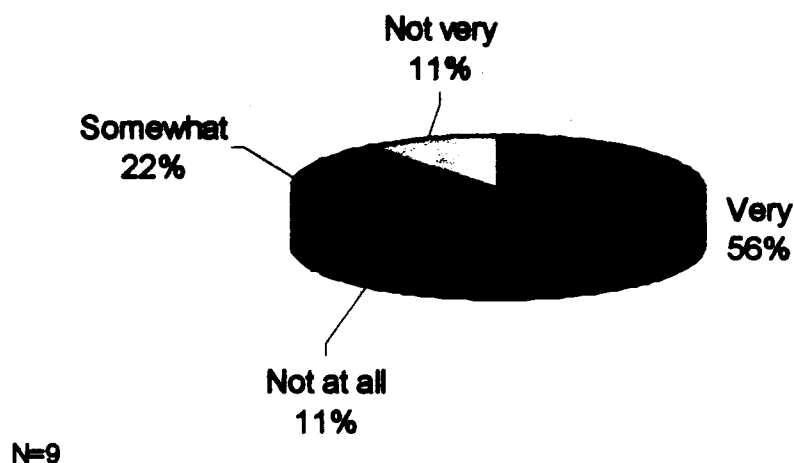
N=44

Chart 14 lists those places that respondents did contact after receiving assistance from HCC. Although the number of responses is small, the results show that respondents contacted providers, health care and social service agencies as well as legal aid to follow up with their problem after receiving assistance from the HCC.

Chart 14. WHAT PROGRAM/AGENCY OR PERSON DID YOU CONTACT		
(for Assistance after Meeting with Center Staff)?		
Responses	Number of Responses	Percentages
Provider/Clinic/Hospital	3	33%
Other	1	11%
Medicare	1	11%
Department of Social Services	1	11%
Healthy Families	1	11%
Legal Aid/ legal assistance/lawyer	1	11%
Don't Know/Remember	1	11%
Total		
*(percentages are rounded so total may not equal 100%)	9	99%*

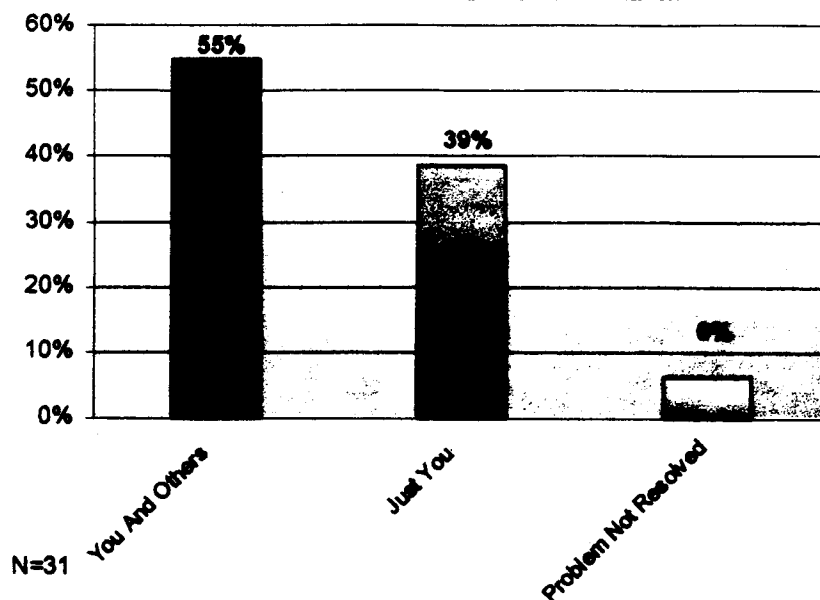
Chart 15 illustrates respondents' opinions of the helpfulness of these other agencies. Note that 78% reported they were "somewhat" or "very helpful", compared to the 91% who reported their assistance by HCC as "somewhat" or "very helpful". These results suggest that both the assistance provided directly by the HCC as well as the agencies consumers contacted afterwards were quite helpful in resolving their health-related problems.

**Chart 15. HOW HELPFUL WAS THE AGENCY THAT YOU CONTACTED FOR ASSISTANCE?**



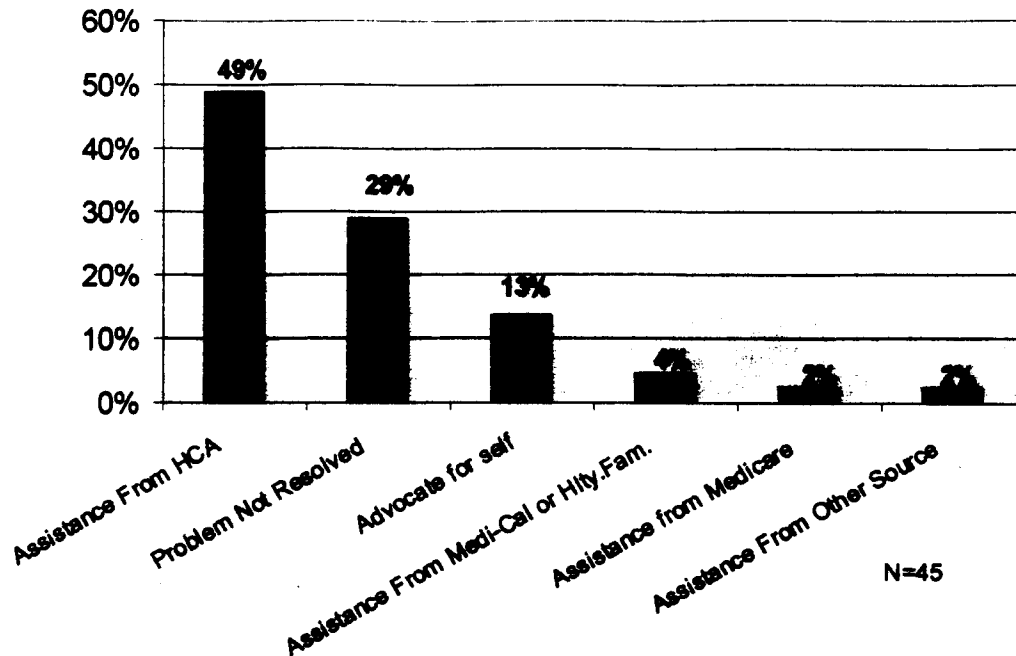
It is clear from previous analyses of the Health Consumer Alliance Database that consumers often call for assistance for themselves and other family members or friends. For example, a woman may call to find out about insurance options for herself and her three children. Among HCC-LA consumers, more than half of the respondents reported that the resolution of the problem helped more than one person.

**Chart 16. DID THE RESOLUTION OF YOUR PROBLEM HELP...**



Respondents were asked, "what was the most important thing you did that lead to the resolution of your problem?" Almost 50% replied, "calling HCC", although 29% reported that their problem had not yet been resolved. Other responses included advocating for their self, and receiving assistance from Medi-Cal, Medicare and from other sources.

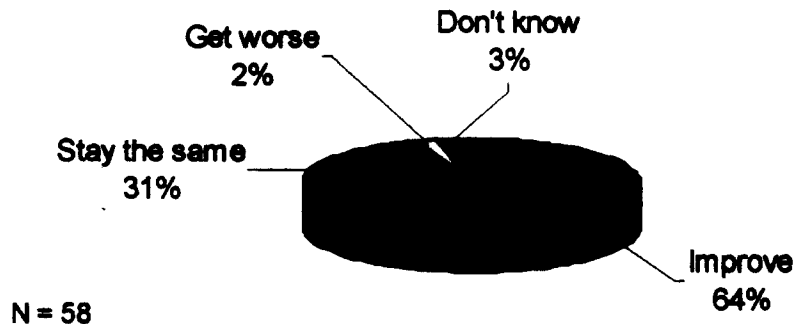
**Chart 17. WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU DID THAT LEAD TO THE RESOLUTION OF YOUR PROBLEM OR GETTING INFORMATION?**



### **Change in Ability to Obtain Needed Services**

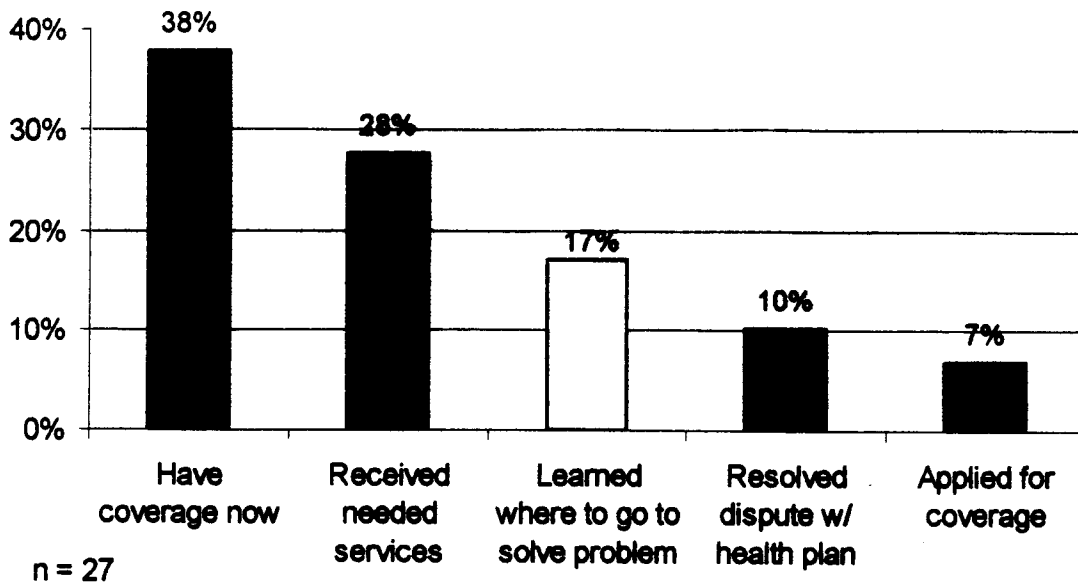
One goal of the Health Consumer Alliance is to develop more effective and informed consumers. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents report that their ability to get the health care they need improved after their contact with the HCC (Chart 18). This marks a 17% increase from the last HCA Report.

**Chart 18. AFTER TALKING TO THE HCC, DID YOUR ABILITY TO GET THE HEALTH CARE YOU NEED...**



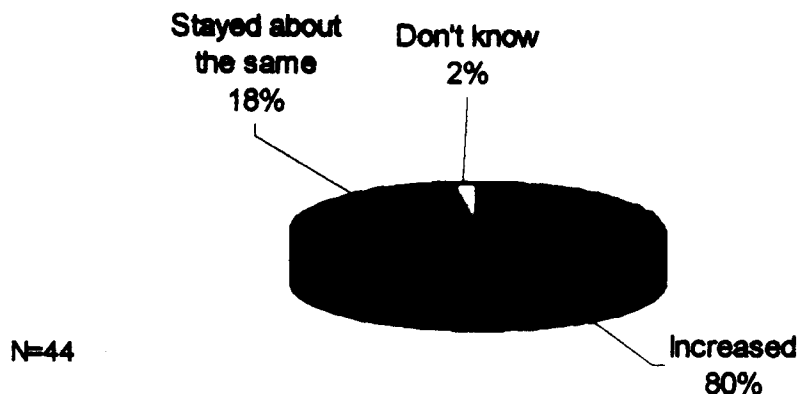
These same respondents were then asked how their ability to get health care improved. The responses are shown in Chart 19. Similar to previous reports, most respondents mentioned that they obtained health care coverage, or specific needed services. Most of the respondents who reported *have coverage now* indicated that their coverage is Medi-Cal. Those who applied for coverage mentioned Healthy Families and Medi-Cal.

**Chart 19. How did your ability to get healthcare improve?**



Similarly, 80% of the respondents reported that their ability to solve health care problems in general improved after their contact with the HCC (Chart 20). This suggests that education and empowerment played a strong role in how the HCC provided assistance and support to the individuals and that consumers are becoming more informed and self-empowered health care consumers.

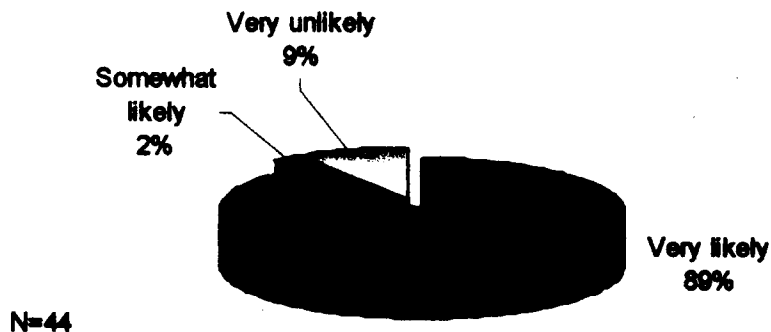
**Chart 20. AFTER YOUR CONTACT WITH THE CENTER, WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOUR ABILITY TO SOLVE SIMILAR HEALTH CARE PROBLEMS HAS...**



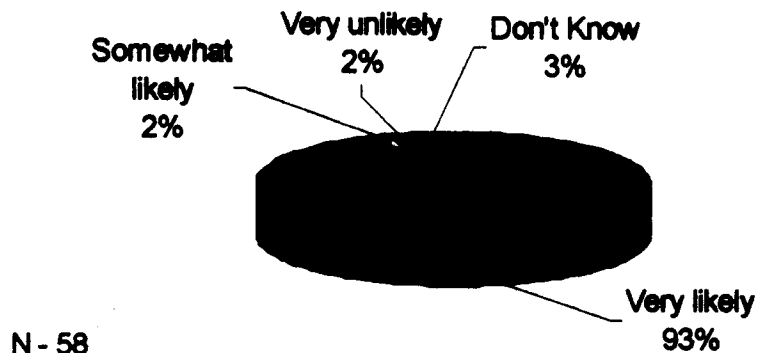
## **Consumer Satisfaction with Services**

Over 90% of the respondents indicated that they would contact HCC again if they have another health-related problem that they couldn't solve on their own (Chart 21). This is 10% higher than reported in the previous HCA Report. This suggests that HCC consumers have a high level of satisfaction with the services they received. Similarly, 92% of the consumers stated that they would be somewhat or very likely to recommend the HCC to a family member or friend (See Chart 22) if they had a health-related problem.

**Chart 21. IN THE FUTURE, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD CONTACT THE CENTER AGAIN IF YOU COULDN'T SOLVE A HEALTH-RELATED PROBLEM ON YOUR OWN?**



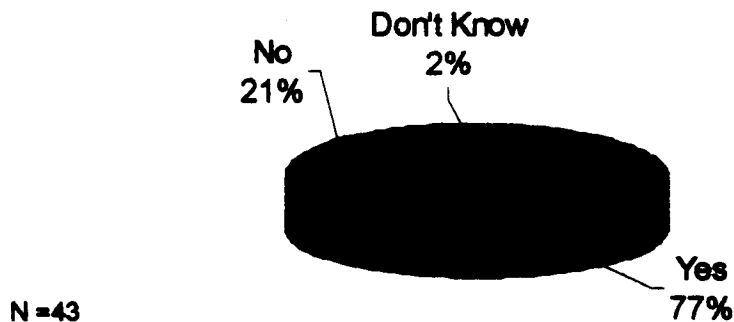
**Chart 22. HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND THE CENTER TO A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND IF THEY HAD A HEALTH-RELATED PROBLEM?**



## **Health Coverage, Medi-Cal & Managed Care**

This section illustrates Consumers' responses to questions about health coverage and enrollment in Medi-Cal or Healthy Families. The "N" found at the bottom left corner of each chart describes the number of respondents per question. These results cannot be generalized to represent the whole HCC population; rather, this is a sample of respondents who agreed to participate in the Consumer Survey. The evaluators cannot validate actual coverage rates of consumers, but it can be assured that all responses have been taken directly from the consumers. In some cases, the person who answered the survey questions was not the actual client, and thus there may be some unintentional error (i.e. an adult parent responding for an elderly parent, or an aunt responding for her niece).

**Chart 23. DO YOU HAVE ANY HEALTH INSURANCE OR  
HEALTH COVERAGE NOW?**



Just over three-fourths of the respondents reported that they had some kind of health insurance at the time of the survey (Chart 23). Chart 24 shows the type of coverage reported by respondents. Over 57% of the respondents originally contacted the HCC regarding an eligibility problem, and of these nearly two-thirds had no insurance and had not yet applied for coverage. At the time of the Consumer Survey, 77% of the respondents reported that they did have some kind of coverage. For Chart 24, the category, "work" refers to the client or a family member's work which provides their insurance. "Public & Private" refers to those respondents who report having both Medicare and private coverage, Medi-Cal and private coverage, etc., indicating that they are covered by at least one public program and one private program. Note that 82% of the respondents have Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, Medicare or the combination of Medi-Cal/Medicare.



**Chart 24. WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE FROM?**

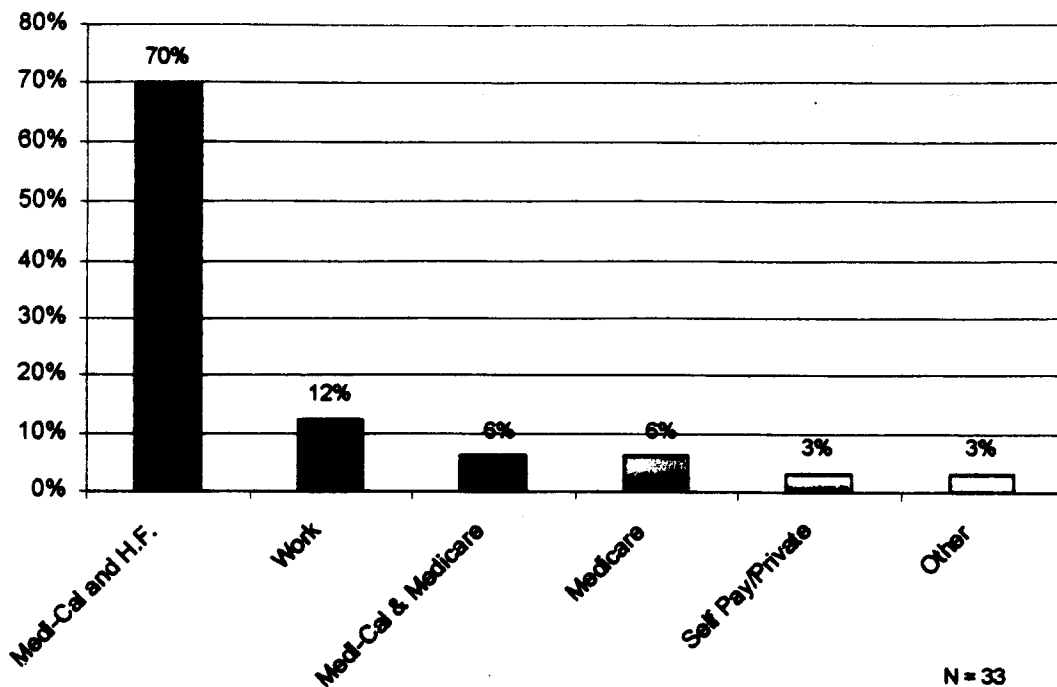
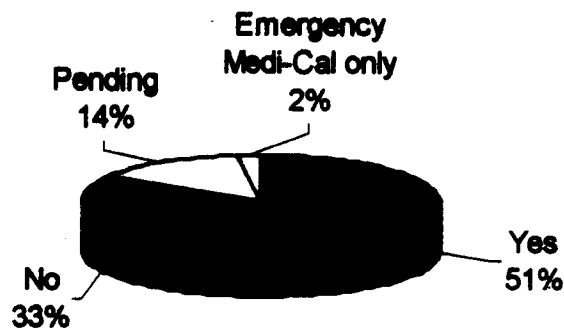


Chart 25 shows the percentage of respondents who are enrolled in Medi-Cal at the time of the interview. Just over half (51%) of the respondents reported that they are currently enrolled in full-scope Medi-Cal.

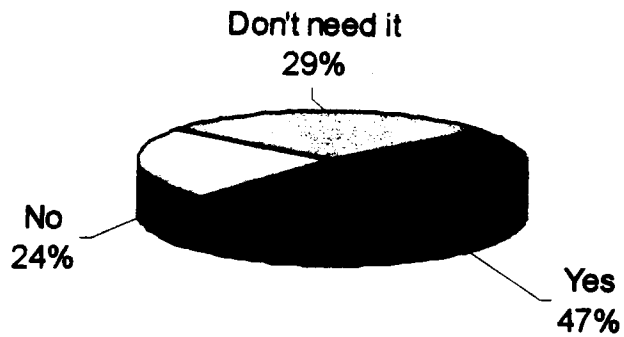
**Chart 25. ARE YOU ENROLLED IN MEDI-CAL NOW?**



N=43

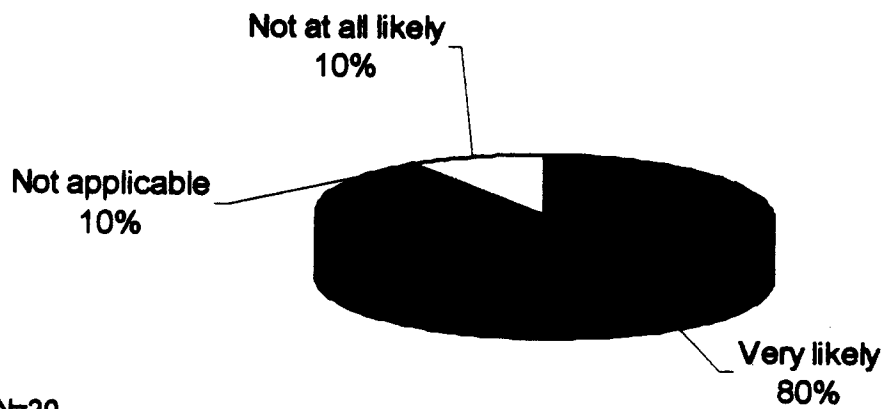
Fifty-three percent of those who are *not* enrolled in Medi-Cal reported that they had applied in the past year (See Chart 26). Still, the majority of respondents said they would be "very likely" to apply for Medi-Cal if they were eligible for the program. When asked why they did not enroll, most reported that they were not eligible, they were waiting for a response, or didn't know about the benefits.

**Chart 26. HAVE YOU APPLIED FOR MEDI-CAL ANYTIME  
IN THE PAST YEAR?**



N=21

**Chart 27. HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD APPLY (OR  
REAPPLY) FOR MEDI-CAL (OR HEALTHY FAMILIES IF  
CHILD) IF YOU WERE ELIGIBLE FOR THE PROGRAM?**



N=20

## **Health Access and Utilization**

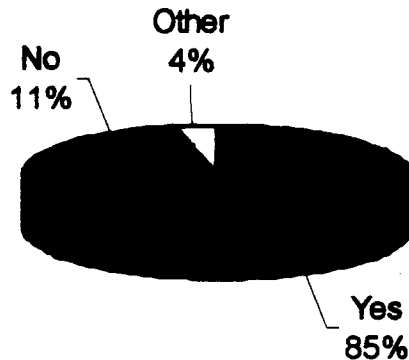
This section shows consumers' responses to questions about access to care. Again, the "N" found at the bottom of each chart describe the number of respondents per question. In Chart 28, 65% of the respondents report they have a regular source of health care. Among those respondents who have coverage and a regular source of care, 85% report that they know how to select a particular doctor from their provider group (see Chart 29). These results are just slightly higher than those found in the previous HCA Report.

**Chart 28. DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN DOCTOR, NURSE  
OR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL THAT YOU NORMALLY  
GO TO WHEN YOU NEED HEALTH CARE SERVICES?**



N=43

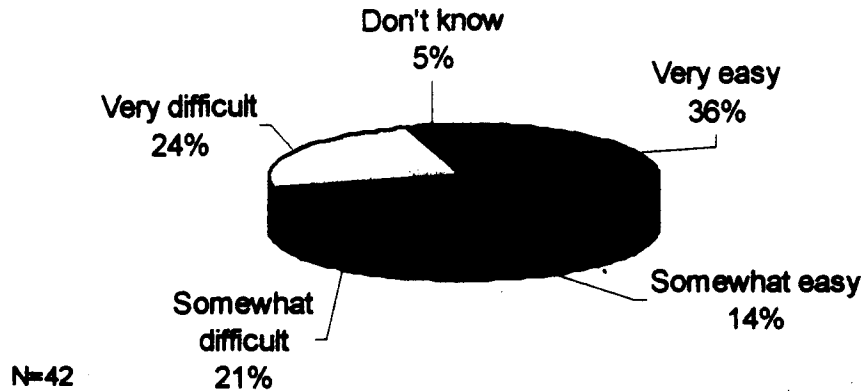
**Chart 29. [IF CLIENT HAS INSURANCE]  
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SELECT A PARTICULAR  
DOCTOR FROM YOUR PROVIDER GROUP WHO CAN  
CARE FOR YOU ON A REGULAR BASIS?**



N=27

Chart 30 shows that, despite the high percentage of respondents who reported having a regular provider, 45% of them say it is "somewhat" or "very difficult" to get medical care when they need it.

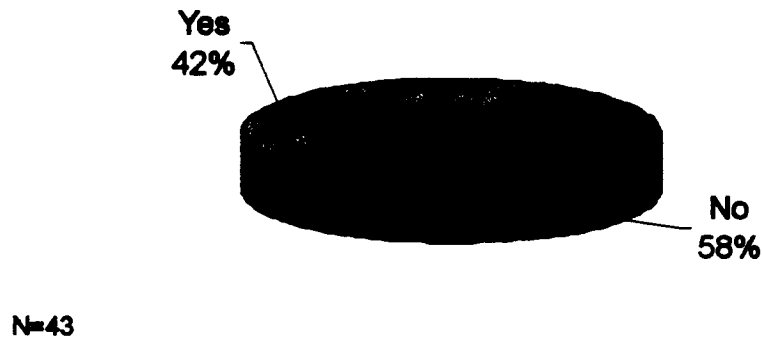
**Chart 30. HOW EASY OR DIFFICULT IS IT FOR YOU TO  
GET MEDICAL CARE WHEN YOU NEED IT?  
WOULD YOU SAY IT IS...**



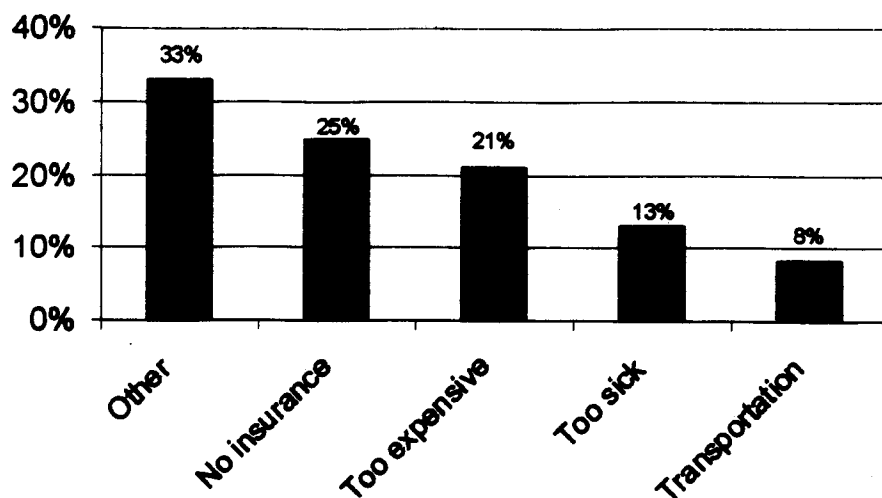
When asked about their use of the emergency room (ER), the majority (60%) reported that they did not use the ER in the past twelve months. Twenty-six percent said they had used it once, nine percent had used it twice, and five percent used it three times. Nobody reported using the ER more than five times over the past twelve months. Eighty-three percent of those who used the ER said they went there because they felt it was an emergency. The others mentioned that they went due to mental illnesses or because of an accident.

Chart 31 shows that 42% of the respondents reported having needed to see a doctor in the past 12 months but did not see one, slightly higher than previously reported. When asked why, most respondents cited affordability problems (i.e. "too expensive", "no insurance"). Chart 32 below illustrates their responses.

**Chart 31. AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS,  
DID YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEEDED TO  
SEE A DOCTOR BUT DIDN'T?**



**Chart 32. [FOR THOSE WHO NEEDED TO GO TO DOCTOR] WHY DIDN'T YOU GO TO THE DOCTOR?**



The "other" category includes participants' responses such as bad doctors, they don't prescribe the medicine I need; not sure if Medi-Cal covered her; needs a specialist; tired of getting injections; hard to get appointments, takes too long; they always say the same thing when I go; and, waiting time too long.

More than one-third (37%) of the respondents indicated they had a chronic health condition, but of these, only 76% regularly see a doctor for their condition. Their chronic conditions included heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, mental illnesses, cancer, polio and back pain, among others.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

The information provided in this report illustrates findings from the Consumer Survey conducted by the HCA evaluation team at USC. Specifically, this report provides information about consumers who received individual assistance from the HCC-LA, and whose cases were closed from January through April, 2002. These results only reflect the responses given by HCC consumers who agreed to give their names and numbers to the evaluator and agreed to complete the phone interview. This information may be used to examine consumer's opinions of the helpfulness of HCC, and make appropriate modifications based on their feedback. Similarly, the positive results found in this report should be shared with staff and used to recognize and celebrate the hard work of the staff.

The results from this report indicate an improvement of consumer satisfaction, despite the already high levels of satisfaction measured in previous reports. The importance and value of the HCC-LA in assisting low-income consumers in Los Angeles County is demonstrated by the continued high level of satisfaction with services, as well as consumers receiving vital information to resolve their health problems.

Compared to a previous Feedback Report, results from this report showed a 17% increase in consumers' ability to get the health care they need following their interactions with the HCC. In addition, consumers' ability to solve similar health care problems increased from 46% in the previous report to 80% in this report. Also, a higher number of respondents reported having coverage, 62% in the previous report, compared to 77% in this report. These highlights suggest that the HCC-LA is constantly establishing higher goals, and succeeding in achieving these goals.

In conclusion, this report illustrates an increase in consumer satisfaction and resolution of services provided by the HCC-LA. One of the main goals of the Health Consumer Alliance Project is to provide direct, efficient consumer assistance to individuals with a broad range of healthcare problems. The HCC-LA has succeeded in meeting this goal by assisting consumers with problems related to health coverage, access, problems with specialty and ancillary services, prescriptions, appropriateness of care among others using expertise, experience and appropriate tools. Over the past three years in which this Consumer Survey has been implemented, survey respondents of the HCC-LA have consistently reported their satisfaction and appreciation of the services received; moreover, the results have indicated an increased level of satisfaction every year.